

## THE START OF LITTLE LEAGUE

(The following article, written by Crary Trimble, appeared in the Feb. 19, 1953 issue of the *Old Colony Memorial*. -- Ed.)

When the men interested in developing the Duxbury Little League began discussing the field

back of the Library as a possible location for the boys' ball park, oldtimers dug out faded photographs and remembered when. If the Little Leaguers should wind up with this area as their field, it will be one more evidence that there's "nothing new under the sun."

There are 2 men still living in Duxbury who were members of the original Duxbury Baseball Association which was formed in 1890 when the playing field was directly back of the Library, though the building was different.

Right fielder William Facey, who moved with his family to his present home on Surplus St. in 1892, was able to name all but 3 of the members in the picture of that team taken in 1891. (And he says his memory is failing!) Mr. Facey, who was born in Newfoundland in 1864, followed his job to Duxbury when the cable service was instituted in 1884. For many years an operator at the cable office which still stands at the corner of Washington and St. George streets, he has been retired for nearly 30 years.

Mr. Facey has many pictures of old Duxbury activities, including town meeting day at the old Town Hall, an auction at Cushing's store, which is now Oliver L. Barker's home on Washington St., and old-time yacht races in the bay. He can show the front of Peterson's general store (now Walter Prince's home) and pictures of winter, one of which shows a horse-drawn sleigh coming down Washington St. in front of the Winsor House through a narrow white canyon carved from a snow bank nearly as high as the driver.

Harry Bradley of Alden St., retired executive of Plymouth Cordage Company and long-time Town Moderator of Duxbury, was 3rd baseman. He held down the "hot corner." He, too, was a member of the original team and was able to remember 2 of the 3 players Mr. Facey couldn't identify.

He is at present chairman of the trustees of the Duxbury Free Library where from the new reading room, one can look down over the area which was once the original playing field. The dressing rooms and equipment storage were in a room of the old library which was moved to become the Town Office opposite the police station when Mrs. Wright endowed the present brick building.

The original team did not play many seasons, but in 1914 Mr. Bradley was the enthusiastic organizer of a revival. This team, which soon became known as the "Bradley Colts" lasted several years and attained semi-professional status. The late Paul Peterson was for several years their manager.

Group enthusiasm for the project expressed itself in many ways, starting with the members of the team and their friends ploughing up and leveling the field, now known as Train Field, land for which had been given by Arthur Train.

The determination of the earlier group to meet their needs and survive was shown in their lively winter program of entertainment at Duxbury Hall, which is now the Unitarian Parish House on Washington St. The "new uniforms" in which they proudly had their pictures taken that season of 1891 were provided by proceeds from the minstrel show organized by their manager, Herbert Freeman. Mr. Freeman, who was also an employee at the cable office, lived the house on St. George St. which has since been owned by the family of James Bryant Conant, recently named Ambassador to West Germany.

Both Mr. Facey and Mr. Bradley remember well the talented comedian, Martin Hannigan, who was the big drawing card to the shows they put on. Martin's brother, Tom, was a

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team member, and they were both employed. Tom as a conductor, on the railroad line which has left Duxbury so many street names as reminders of its existence.

Mr. Bradley has a playbill of such an entertainment for the Duxbury Baseball Association. H. C. Freeman was fairly prominent as a songster, and Harry Bradley himself favored the company with a rendition of "Who's Dat A Callin'."

In "Part the Second" of the program the highlight (according to size of print) seems to have been a cornet solo by "Mr. E. H. Litchfield, accompanied by Mrs. Adams, pianist." There was a sketch in which Martin Hannigan was "Felix Gumbo from Way-back" and William Facey was "Prof. Collodion, photographer."

Charles H. Alden performed "feats of strength, showing the different methods of using heavy dumb bells," and H. C. Freeman had a separate billing "in a variety of popular motto and sentimental songs."

The whole thing concluded "with the Laughable Farce, the Baby Elephant," in which Bill Facey was P.T. Barnum, the showman, Harry Bradley played "Smithers, Rifle's servant," and Martin Hannigan played "Cuff," one of the servants of "Old Growler, Lover of Animals," played by Charles Alden. It doesn't say who was the elephant.

In the picture of the first baseball team, the "little leaguer" with the group was Harry Bradley's "kid brother," John. He served as water boy and adoring mascot to the team who had fun working and playing together in sporting contests with other teams similarly organized in the area.

With the 1953 season coming up, and talk of a permanent location for a ball park - with even hints of a community recreation center which might lead to older lineups of baseball teams - those tempted to say, "it can't happen here" might take the long look back. It did happen here.